

## News Release

# Wildland Firefighter Training at U of M, Crookston Provides Valuable Opportunity for Students

By Itollefs on Monday, March 26, 2012

Students in the Natural Resource Management Program within the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department at the University of Minnesota, Crookston recently completed wildland firefighter training. This year's class of 64 trainees included 48 students enrolled in the Introduction to Forestry class at the U of M, Crookston. They were joined by 16 faculty and students coordinated by Susan N. Ellis-Felege, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Biology Department from the University of North Dakota, along with 2 members of the Middle River Volunteer Fire Department. A total of 623 students have completed this training on the Crookston campus in the last 14 years.



Since 1999, both the S-130: Basic Wildland Firefighter Training and S-190: Basic Fire Weather & Fire Behavior courses have been offered for students. These courses are the first level of training required nationally for anyone to work on a wild fire or prescribed burn for state and federal agencies. The S-130/190 training consists of at least 32 hours of classroom training and tests as well as "hands-on" training in the field using personal protective equipment, tools and working on a controlled fire. This certification has opened the door to many employment opportunities in the natural resource field for hundreds of our students and graduates. Another 33 UMC students took advantage of an annual Wildland Firefighters Safety refresher course also offered.



"Fire impacts natural resource management," says Tom Feiro, one of the wildfire firefighter trainers. "Whether it is in a wildfire situation or using fire to manage the resources, a career in this field will at some point involve fire. Our students need to know how to handle a wildfire or use fire effectively in management."

Offering the training began as a joint venture by U of M, Crookston and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service when staff from Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge provided the instruction. It has blossomed into a multi-agency training staff sharing their expertise with the students. This year the instructors represented the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service from both Minnesota and North Dakota, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, U. S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Other years the National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Nature Conservancy have also been represented. Several upperclassmen from the U of M, Crookston with firefighting experience also assisted with the instruction.

The training is coordinated by Associate Professor Phil Baird, and laboratory coordinators Laura Bell, and Tom Feiro, all from the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department on the Crookston campus. In April students will have field training. This training is conducted by breaking the students into crews where they use different tools and techniques in a situation with fire present but under close supervision of the instructors.

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 26 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and 36 concentrations, including 10 online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,600 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

*In the photos:*  
*Top, right: Classroom instruction takes place in Bede Ballroom. In April, students will use what they learned in a practice exercise in the field.*

*Middle, left: Students carry a fire shelter in their pack and during training they must be able to deploy the shelter in 25 seconds or less. These fire shelters protect the firefighters when the fire is in danger of overwhelming them*

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